THE DEMONSTRATIVE IN MALTESE

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The study of Maltese linguistics within the field of the Arabic dialects presents some problems that are both interesting and baffling. This has long been affirmed by serious scholars, such as Carl Brockelmann who, in his book *Semitische Sprachwissenschaft*, remarks that the Maltese language has developed independently of the other dialects of Arabic and has fallen very early under various alien influences from which they have been spared. It must be presumed that he was referring to Italian and Sicilian, perhaps even to English, all three of which belong to other language families.

But even as interesting and more baffling still are the problems that the linguist delving into the Maltese language has to face and try to solve within the Semitic language-family itself. I am referring to several phenomena occurring in Maltese which, though definitely Semitic, seem to be unexplainable if referred only to Classical Arabic, and without parallel in the modern dialects. In his essay 'Maltese as a mixed language', Prof. J. Aquilina thus comments on such phenomena: 'Maltese has hundreds of Semitic words which, as far as we can say now, are local formations but some of which may as well be semantic residues of a previous Semitic vocabulary.' The existence of these phenomena has given rise to the most extravagant theories on the Phoenician origin of modern Maltese, theories to which hardly any scientific value is nowadays attached. Jean Cantineau, before giving a bibliography of linguistic works on the Maltese dialect in his essay 'La Dialectologie Arabe', finds it necessary to remark that 'ce pader a été depuis longtemps l’attention des orientalistes, en particulier à cause de certains traits puniques qui semblent s’y être conservés.'

In the following essay I intend to make a close study of one of the above-mentioned phenomena (or 'erratic blocks', as Stumme prefers to call them) of Maltese - the demonstrative, which several linguists have found worthy of a considerable attention. Brockelmann, Aquilina, Preca, Nöldeke and others have all expressed varying and at times contrasting opinions on the etymology of the Maltese demonstrative. Another recent attempt has been the work of Wolfdietrich Fischer who, in his book *Die Demonstrativen Bildungen der Neuarabischen Dialekte* (1959), has given
us the most exhaustive treatment of the subject. However, Mr. Fischer
has, in my opinion, missed the crux of the problem when he tried to ex-
plain the present demonstrative only through analogy with the other
Arabic dialects and the internal development of Maltese, thus virtually
excluding all possibilities of influences or residues from other Semitic
sources. Moreover, Fischer has made an excellent use of the insufficient
data available to him, which led him sometimes to conclusions that are
far-fetched.

The Maltese demonstrative, as in other Semitic languages, may be of
two kinds: that denoting a near object and that denoting a distant object.
The following are the forms of the demonstrative pronoun which indicates
a near object:

Singular: m. dā dān dānā hedān(a)
    f. dī dīn dīnā hedīn(a)
Plural: c. dāy dāy dāyān hedāy(a)

For a distant object:

Singular: m. dāk dāka hedāk(a)
    f. dīk dīka hedīk(a)
Plural: c. dāy k dāyka hedāyk(a)

The above words, besides being the normal pronominal forms, are also
used as adjectives. As such, they stand in front of the noun they qualify,
which takes the definite article, thus:

dān il-barmīl, dīk il-mara, dāy n it-tfāl, dīn il-tarbiyya.

According to Fischer, the forms dān(a), dīn(a), dāka, dīka, found mostly as
independent substantives, are seldom used attributively in front of a
noun, the forms dān, dīn, dāk, dīk being preferred. Personally, I would
rather say that the two forms are used in different contexts, dān(a) etc.,
being considered more elegant and refined. Thus dānā l-bni edem is a
more formal way of saying dān il-bniedem.

The singular forms dān and dīn may assimilate with the article thus:

dān il-qamar > dal-qamar dīn il-firda > dil-firda
dān is-sehēr > das-sehēr f'hēdīn il-gżira > f'hedīl-gżira

As for the plural dāy, it may also assimilate with the article in current
speech, giving phonetically a form da which is easier and shorter to
pronounce:

daṭ il-kelmiet > dal-kelmiet dāy n is-siɡar > das-siɡar
daṭ n in-nies > dan-nies

The forms bedān, hedāk etc., showing initial be as prefix, are now-
adays very rarely used. Vassalli, however, writing almost two centuries
ago, notes that the prefixed forms are quite frequent, but adds that no substantial difference in meaning is thereby indicated. For Cremona, the prefix adds in emphasis to the demonstrative particle. I agree with Stulcliffe and Fischer who comment that these forms are only used in literary language, such as poetry, elevated prose and sermons, as forms that are stylistically high-flown on account of their antique flavour. May I add, besides, that even in this context they are tending to disappear, hence acquiring unfavourable connotations of mimicry and imitation of pomposity.

One word on the accent. In all the forms given above the accent falls on the syllable introduced by the consonant d, thus: bedān, bedī, dāgra. But, in the cases where in current speech the attributive demonstrative is phonetically considered as part of the noun, the main accent shifts from the demonstrative to the noun, according to the rules of accentuation: dar-dāgī, dal-bieb, dil-qasriyya, leaving at most a secondary accent on the d-syllable of the demonstrative. This is the general rule whenever the demonstrative adjective is in elision with the article.

I shall now proceed to compare the forms of the Maltese demonstrative with those of Classical Arabic and with parallel formations occurring in the other modern dialects. In Classical Arabic we find a basic demonstrative particle dhā (I. ḏī, pl. ʿulā), meaning 'this' or 'that', to which affixes are joined to give the desired connotations of proximity or remoteness. A particle kā, related to that used for the 2nd person singular and plural (Ar. ka, ki, kumā, kum; M. k, kom), is suffixed to the basic demonstrative to denote a distant object. A prefix hā is added to give further emphasis to the demonstrative.1 This fundamental demonstrative

1 This particle hā has a very important role in the rendering of the demonstrative in Semitic Languages. It serves as definite article prefixed in Hebrew, and suffixed in Aramaic (Heb. הָבָא habbā; Aram. כַּבָּא kibba > baltā). It is used as prefix to reinforce the demonstrative in Arabic, Aramaic and Syriac (Ar. ḏībāhā etc., see above; Aram. ḏ̡ī ḏ̡ibāḥā, ḏ̡ā ḏ̡ibāḥā, ḏ̡ā ḏ̡ibāḥā; Syr. ܚdbc hāndā, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ibāḥē, ḏ̡ib
is inflected and hence the following forms result:

'this': dhā hādḥā
dī (tū) hādḥī (ḥādiḥī)
'ulā ('ulā'ī) hā'ulā (hā'ulā'ī)

'that': dhāka dhālika hādḥāka
tāka, tīka, (dhīka) tilka ḥātāka, ḥātiḳa, (ḥādiḳa)
'ulāka, 'ulā'ika 'ulālika hā'ulāka, hā'ulā'ika

All the modern dialects follow two or more of the above schemes more or less closely, with the exception of the plural forms, for which new formations derived from the singular have been adopted.

Thus, Iraqi Arabic, always notably close to the Classical, has: hādhā, hādhī, hādbōl, where the singular forms, when used attributively, assimilate with the article and contract to bel. For the demonstrative 'that': hādbāk (dhāk), hādbīk (-īk), pl. hādbīlak are used.

In the dialect of Syria, the dh of the Classical changes as usual to a simple d, thus forming: bāda (bā), bādī, bādūl, where all the three forms, used adjectivally, may contract to bal. To express remoteness, hāk is used for all genders and numbers, though an alternative ba(i)dāk, ba(i)dīk, ba(i)dīlīk, is permitted. In the Lebanese dialect we find the same usages with a few variants: bājada, bājā, bājāt, bājadāk, bājadīk, bājadīlīk.

Egyptian Arabic may be considered as the most independent dialect as far as the demonstrative goes. Here the bā particle is missing altogether as prefix. The forms of the pronoun 'this' are: dā, dī, dōl. For 'that', dīk or dāk is used for all genders and numbers, though another unusual form exists: dukba, f. dikba, pl. dukbanma, dukbam, where the bā particle strangely becomes a suffix, instead of a prefix as in the other dialects. Also peculiar to Egyptian is the fact that the above forms are placed after the noun when used attributively:

el-kursī dā, eṣ-ṣīyāra dī, el-gawāb dāk.

The Western or Maghrebinic group of Arabic dialects, comprising those of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, offer roughly the same forms:

it, here!), 'Ara, ḥa, fiex ġejam!' (Just see, what a situation we are in, now), 'Mela m'intix tarah, ḥa!' (Aren't you seeing it, right here before you!), 'Ma, xi ġmiel ta' xoghol!' (Look, what fine craftsmanship!), will clearly indicate the demonstrative function of this particle and will show the connection with the Arabic bā 'at-tambīḥ. In this sense, the particle is used in Maltese especially when the speaker wants to draw the hearer's attention to some object he has right under his eyes, or to a situation in which he finds himself at the moment. Hence, the abundant use of this particle with certain verbs in the imperative: ū (take), atra (look, see), isma' (hear, come).
hāda ḍa ḥadāk ḍak
ḥādī ḍi ḥādik ḍik
ḥādū ḍū ḥādūk(a) ḍūk

In Algeria, the demonstrative of proximity, when used as adjective, takes the form bād-ī, which holds good for all genders and numbers. Besides the regular form bādū for the plural, we may also meet an alternative form bādūna, bādūm, occasionally bādūm, which occurs in the dialects of several towns from Libya to Morocco. According to Fischer, this plural form has evolved from the root bād- of the singular by the addition of the regular plural suffix -ūna of Classical Arabic nominal forms.

From what has been said above, it seems quite clear that the Maltese demonstrative forms have much in common with those of the North African dialects. With Maghrebinic dā, dī, dū we may confront Maltese dā, dī, day, as also the subsequent forms enlarged with the prefix ba- (M. be-), or with the suffix -k, or with both in the form ḍadāk. We may also compare N.Afr. bedān(a) with M. bedayn(a). However, even after comparing Maltese with Maghrebinic, as well as with the other dialects, we are still left with some unusual phenomena which seem to be unexplainable within the limits of Arabic dialectology. The possibilities of explaining these anomalies are two: they are either (i) local formations or modifications of the Arabic forms, or (ii) they are residues of a pre-Arabic Semitic vocabulary or the result of foreign influences outside the Semitic language family.

The presence of the odd final -n in the Maltese demonstrative of proximity has been noticed and discussed by several linguists, and most have found it necessary to trace it back to a Semitic origin outside the Arabic language group, and exactly to the group of Semitic languages denoted as the North-Western or Canaanitic group (which comprises Canaanitic, Phoenician and Punic, Hebrew, and Aramaic). Others have tried to explain it through analogy occurring inside the Maltese language or even through analogy with Romance languages.

But here one important question arises on which the solution of the whole problem depends. Was the original form dā, dī, day, to which a suffix -n(a) was later added, or was it dān(a), din(a), of which the final n(a) particle may be dropped?

Roudanovsky, in his 'Quelques Particularités du Dialecte Arabe de Malte' (1909), considers the form dā, dī as the basic form, and draws the reader's attention to the 'curious fact' that out in the country in Malta you always hear dā, dī, while cultured persons write dān and dāna, din and dīna. But Roudanovsky fails to give an explanation of this fact which, he comments, 'Allah seul est en état de comprendre'!
Barbera takes the problem up where Roudanovsky has left and gives what seems to me a very fanciful and improbable solution. He derives it from the suffix -ni which is sometimes joined to certain pronouns in Sicilian. Thus, for tu (lt. io, 'I') Sicilians in some parts of the island say iuni, soni for so (lt. suo, 'his'), cani for ca (lt. qua, 'here'), stuni, stani for chista, chista (lt. questo, questa, 'this' m. & f.), etc. He argues that, through political and commercial relations existing since the Norman Conquest of the island (1090), the Maltese men of letters began to adopt this romance consonantal ending and to join it to the semitic demonstrative pronoun, while the peasant population continued to use the pure Arabic demonstrative dā, dī. The existence, at such an early period, of a body of men of letters strong enough to create a literary jargen and to make innovations of the sort and transfer them to the language of the people is quite improbable. Besides, at least for this detail of information, Barbera seems to be fully dependent on Roudanovsky, as he had never been on the island. Any Maltese could tell that the choice in the use of these two alternative forms depends not on the erudition or less of the user, but rather on the grammatical function of the demonstrative in that particular phrase (i.e. whether it is used adjectively or pronominally). Hence, I can perceive no difference in the frequency with which both forms occur, out in the country, in the villages, or in the cultured conversation of learned persons.

Both Brockelmann and Nöldeke consider the -na suffix as an old semitic particle. The former holds it as the same element with which the plural form of the demonstrative pronoun is formed in Spanish Arabic: baylih. Nöldeke, however, assigns it to an even older origin, considering it as an old determinative particle which is lacking in Classical Arabic.

And this brings us to the theory that is most common, that which considers this particle as a residue of a pre-Arabic semitic element from the Canaanitic group of languages. In semitic languages, besides the two demonstrative particles ðb, pl. 'l and ba (which we have already met, joined together in the sequence hādba etc. of Classical Arabic and its modern dialects), we find another demonstrative element n, which is specially conspicuous in the Canaanitic group. This has been mentioned by several linguists, but has never been studied thoroughly in connection with the odd n of the Maltese demonstrative. In the following paragraphs I intend to make a short review of the important cases where this demonstrative element n appears in Semitic languages. This will go to prove that there is a long tradition of this suffix n acting as a demonstrative particle, and that consequently one should be very cautious before considering the n in dān as an unimportant letter inserted into our
demonstrative merely for euphonic purposes or by a freak of the people’s fancy for analogy.

To begin with, old Phoenician distinguished not only between a near object ה י ze(h) ‘this’ and a distant object מ ו hu ‘that’, but also between an object of immediate proximity and one that, though near, stands at a considerable distance from the speaker. Thus, for ‘this one here’ old Phoenician uses the form ל ז n for the masculine, of which the feminine form is not recorded. This form, however, is rather unusual and is limited to the inscriptions of Byblos and Ur. Here are some examples taken from these inscriptions:

ת ה ו n ‘under this one here’
מ ו כ ה פ נ ‘this copper altar here’
ל י ו מ ‘I have made me this resting-place here’

Note that here the demonstrative adjective follows the definite noun it qualifies. The vocalization of this bi-consonantal demonstrative is still obscure, but Friedrich thinks that, considering the Aramaic form ד n, one may suppose the full demonstrative to have been ד n.

The same demonstrative element n can be found in Aramaic and its various dialects. In Western or Biblical Aramaic (which St. Jerome called ‘Chaldaic’) the demonstrative is ד n(h), (<ד n; in Aramaic, the first of two vowels is frequently rendered short – Brockelmann), f. ד n, pl. י ד n, נ ר ר ד n. Besides the above, the form ד n m. & f. meaning ‘that’ also occurs, where the n is suffixed also after the normal form of the demonstrative of distance ד k, f. ד k. The demonstrative may be used pronominally or adjectively. As adjective, it usually follows the noun it qualifies, but in some cases it may also precede it. Here are some examples from the books of Daniel and Esdras:

ע ל n ‘concerning this’
ד n ה ד n ‘this is it’
מ ל n ר n ‘a matter like this’

(Note: the use of the masculine demonstrative with a feminine noun)

Cases of the demonstrative preceding the noun:

The passage from Hebrew ה/י to Arabic إ/د and consequently to /d/ in the modern Arabic dialects, including Maltese, is quite common. Example: Hebr. י n, Cl. Arabic إ/د bn, Maltese widen.
In the Aramaic dialect of the Palestinian Talmud and Midrashim we find the masculine adjectival forms bān, bāhān, bābēn, bādēn; in the dialect of the Targum of Onkelos and Jonathan, only the form bādēn appears. For the pronominal form, both dialects have dēn and feminine dā and plural bāl(ē)n. Once again, as one may see, the n suffix is present and plays an important part in the rendering of the demonstrative.

As it also does in Syriac, the principal representative of the Aramaic dialects of the Eastern group. The Syriac demonstrative forms are: m. bān(ā), f. bā(ā), pl. bāl(ēn), bās, bās; bānā. The masculine form originates from the older form bādenā, by a very early development: bādenā > bānā. The demonstrative particle n appears also in phrases like: jāmān(a) 'today', tammān 'there'.

From the above exposition one can easily see how frequent and how important the n suffix is within the Canaanitic family of Semitic languages in the function of a demonstrative particle. Nor is it only in this group: also the other two main groups offer forms attesting its presence.

To begin with the Oriental group, both Accadian and Assyrian have a demonstrative in n, which is declined like nouns, as in Romance languages:

m. annū, f. annītu; pl. m. annītu, f. annītu
(Ass. annātī, annāti)

As in Syriac, the demonstrative particle n is found in junction with other words such as Assyrian ašrānu 'there', ašanna 'over there', ininna 'now'.

As for the South-Western or Arabic group of Semitic languages, it is quite surprising that the n suffix is missing in the demonstrative of Classical (or North) Arabic. However, it does show up at least in a couple of important adverbial formations, namely bānā 'here' (cp. M. baum(a)), with its derivatives bābānā 'there', and bānnā 'there'.

In Southern Arabic the presence of the final n is much clearer. Sabean inscriptions give the demonstrative forms dhn, t. dbt, 'this', with plural 'in'. It. Also Himyaritic has a suffix n which is joined directly to the

\[\text{denā(h) vinyānā'} \text{ 'this building'}\]
\[\text{denā(h) ḫelmā') 'this dream'}\]

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\[\text{The reader should know that the Aramaic article is affixed at the end of the noun to which it refers, as already noted above.}\]
noun it qualifies: מָזְנָן māznān 'this monument', מַלָּם malām 'this stone'. In many cases the demonstrative pronoun לַד nān is placed before these nouns: לַד מָזְנָן, לַד מַלָּם לַד מֶבֶנְי nān māznān, nān malām nān mebenī 'this building'. In Ethiopic, the language of a South-Arabic population, mainly Sabaean, that emigrated to Abyssinia, the demonstrative is further strengthened by the suffix -a, thus forming the pronouns ūenta, i ūenta, pl. m. ūentā, f. ūentā, which, used as adjectives, precede the nouns they qualify.

Nöldeke, in 'Beiträge zur Semitischen Sprachwissenschaft', notes that Islam has caused a great movement among the Arabs and has scattered even people from the heart of the Yemen in different regions, thus spreading over the areas of expansion several traces of the old Sabaean language. In this way many peculiarities have found their way into, and are now shared by single dialects outside the Yemen. Such would be, according to Nöldeke, the Maltese demonstrative with its odd final n, which he compares to that in the question-word ajna, ēnu, -a, -bom (Syria), ēna, ēnābu etc. (Tunis), ēnib, ēnbi, ēnbūm (Egypt) meaning 'which', and also to hān-dān 'after that' and kamān 'as well'. All these words must be formed of a Classical Arabic stem plus the suffix -n which is a residue of South Arabic and which is missing in the Classical.

The first linguist to comment on the analogy of the Maltese demonstrative with that of the North-Western Semitic languages has been A.E. Caruana in his treatise 'Sull'Origine della Lingua Maltese' (1896). Likewise Annibale Prec, in his 'Malta Cananea' (1904), derives dānā 'questo' from Chaldac dēnāb 'questo e quello', and dāk 'quello' from Chaldac dāq or dāq 'questo'. Prec, one must admit, could fetch up Hebrew and Chaldac etymologies for any Maltese word, but this time, perhaps, he hit quite near goal.

Saydon, in the comparative essay included in 'The Development of Maltese as a written Language ...' (1928), notes the resemblance of the Maltese forms with those of Aramaic, but is of the opinion that the singular 'may have been influenced by the regular dual or by the plural dāqān, where the final n is also found in some of the North African dialects'. The same opinion is expressed much later (1933) in his article 'Bibliographical Aids to the Study of Maltese'.

In the essay 'Maltese as a Mixed Language' (1958), Aquilina gives the forms dān or dān, also dānā', comparing them with the Arabic, Aramaic and Sabaean. Again, in his 'Structure of Maltese' (1959), he draws the corresponding forms in Sabaean and Biblical Aramaic as having a similar ending in n. But he never goes any further.

An interesting and stimulating attempt at explaining the historical
development of the Maltese demonstrative has been the theory forwarded by Woldemietrich Fischer in his treatise on the demonstrative formations of the modern Arabic dialects. Fischer, fully conscious of the similarity between the Maltese forms and those of South Arabic and Aramaic, excludes all possibilities of any connection of these forms with the Maltese, on the grounds that, if the na attested in the Maltese demonstrative were a residue of these old languages, one should then expect similar phenomena in other modern dialects of Arabic, the formation of which had already been closed in its basic features when Malta was arabicized. Fischer, in fact, considers dā, dī as the original demonstrative forms, from which the forms dānā, dīnā developed later by addition of the suffix -na. From dā, dī the plural dāy was formed by the addition of the y characteristic of the plural, as in the plural verbal forms arā (<ara), qarā (<qara), ibdāy (<ibda). Only then did the suffix -na enter on the thus developed forms. Fischer proceeds with his syllogism in this way: a final n is rendered silent in several Maltese words (alseyn > alsey, feyn > fey, mneyn > mney, yumeyn > yumey, baqyn > bāy). In the last example the Arabic original is bāhunā, in which the final vowel, being long, may be retained (bāy, baqyn, baqna; cp. also yiēn, yiēna). On the forms bāy/baqla, existing simultaneously, the forms dāy/dāynā were formed by analogy, the -na ending being felt as suffix. Thus originated the forms dāy, dāyn, dāynā.

In considering impossible a connection between the forms of Maltese and those of South Arabic and Aramaic, Fischer was obviously excluding the commonly held theory of a Semitic substratum in the Maltese language dating back to a time much earlier than the Arab domination and possibly even to the Phoenician colonization of the island. According to this theory, the first Arabs who arrived in Malta must have found some form of Semitic dialect of the Canaanitic group already existing on the island and spoken by at least a part of the population. The Arabic language succeeded without great difficulty in supplanting the previous Semitic dialect and in spreading firm roots, but could not prevent that some of the peculiarities of the former tongue survive in the new Maltese dialect. Such may be the demonstrative with its odd final n, which may be a particle existing already in the pre-Arabic Semitic demonstrative. If such be the case, then Fischer's contention that the original demonstrative was dā, dī from which dānā, dīnā developed later by the addition of the na suffix will prove false. But this has still to be proved. However, the addition of the suffix na to the original Arabic forms just by the force of analogy seems to me very improbable. This would be contrary to the general tendency towards simplification attested in the particles of
Semitic Maltese. So much more, when we consider the complication of the forms dàn ili, dànna l, dìn ili, dîna l (instead of the original da l, di l) resulting from such an addition, and this in a particle in such a frequent colloquial use as the demonstrative adjective. Maltese tends rather to elude a consonant standing between two vowels in such a position, as can be seen, for example, in bhal (At. biḥāl), which when used in front of a definite noun loses the final radical of the word, or in minn (At. min ṣār): bhal it-ṭabīb > bḥat-ṭabīb minn it-ṭabīb > mīt-ṭabīb

The formation of the plural dāy by the addition of suffix y indicating the plural seems to me equally impossible. This plural suffix y occurs in Maltese only in verbal forms. Fischer himself found no other examples but the verbal forms maray (< qara), qaray (< qara, sic.), ibdey (< ibda) to support his theory. Again, I have never met with a noun or nominal form forming the plural in y, which is the standard plural for verbs. To say that analogy has occurred between the pronominal demonstrative form and the verbal forms would be carrying the process of analogy too far, when we consider that this process presupposes a certain homogeneity, at least in the phonological function, of the different words among which it occurs.

Another weak analogy seals Fischer’s theory. He noted quite rightly the similarity between the forms bāynna (bayn, bāy), and daynna (dayn, day), but has, in my opinion, interpreted it erroneously. According to him, the particle na, being felt as suffix because of the co-existence of bāynna and bāy, was joined through analogy to the plural form of the demonstrative day. It is true that the n suffix in both cases is the same demonstrative particle, but its transference from one word to another at a post-Arabic period by mere analogy seems to me improbable. Besides, such an analogy could explain at most only the plural, but what about the singular? Isn’t it even more difficult to conceive that the suffix was subsequently transferred from the plural to the singular forms?

At this point, the reader might say: You have explained the theories of others, finding fault with and criticizing most of them. But what is your solution to the whole problem? I shall expose my theory in the briefest terms and submit it to his approval or further criticism. I am fully aware that I shall only be adding another possible solution to this difficult linguistic problem which perhaps is destined to remain, like so many others even in our language, covered by a thick veil of historic mystery.

I consider the theory of the Semitic pre-Arabic substratum as possible and quite tenable. The existing forms of the Maltese demonstrative suggest to me an original form derived from the Canaanitic group, and in
particular something like *denā* or *dēnā* as in Aramaic. Let us examine words with a similar syllabic formation in Arabic, and follow their development into Maltese. In Maltese, all long vowels are accented; so the long final syllable would be accented. But Maltese cannot have a final open syllable that is accented. What happens in such cases is that the accent is carried back to the penultimate syllable, whose vowel is long if followed by one consonant and short if by two. In this way, the Arabic words: *bunā* ∙ *‘anā*, *Salā* ∙ *fūqā*, *humā* ∙ *‘allā(b)* have developed into Maltese: *hāyna*, *jiēna*, *ghāla*, *būma*, *ālla*. In the same way, *denā* has developed into Maltese *dāna*. Subsequently, the final *a* vowel, now in a weak post-accent position, may fall (and has fallen definitely in some common words) unless it serves some definite purpose. So, we get both *hāyna* and *hāyn*, *jiēna* and *yien*, *Salā* and *Sal*, as in other cases like *fūq* (<Ar. *fauqa* ∙ *fūqā*), *tābi* (<Ar. *taḥta* ∙ *tāba*). But the final *a* has not fallen in *ālla*, where it was sustained by a final *b* in the original, and in *būma*, where the *ā* originally served to indicate the dual. This change explains satisfactorily the disappearance of the final vowel in *dāna(a)*, which presents us with two alternative forms *dān* and *dāna*. On the demonstrative thus formed, the Arabic forms *dā*, *dī* (with their variants *bādā*, *bādī*) seem to have entered. They immediately settled in the language of the people, being so very similar to the original Maltese demonstrative, giving a whole series of different demonstratives: *dā*, *dān*, *bedān*, *dāk*, *bedāk*, etc. Whether the form *dā* existed even before the coming of the Arabs, as an alternative form evolved from *dān*, is different to tell, but I am inclined to think that it did not. A final *n* is dropped in many Maltese words (*šey*, *fey*, *yumey*, *ay*) as Fischer rightly observed, but all these words have a diphthong just before the final *n*, and not a long vowel as in *dān*. Another difficult question regards the feminine and the plural. Was the feminine *dīn*, *dīna* already in existence before the arrival of the Arabs, and what was the plural? As for the feminine, the long-existing masculine forms *dān*, *dāna*, as well as the syllabic formation of the new demonstrative of distance *dik*, *dika*, may have suggested an analogy on which the feminine *dīn*, *dīna* were formed on the new Arabic demonstrative. Or, perhaps, the form *dāna* used to serve for both masculine and feminine, as we have seen it used in Biblical Aramaic, and the genders were only later differentiated by the the different vowelization of the Arabic stem. The existence of both forms *dā*, *dī* and *dān(a)*, *dīn(a)* together is explainable by the facility of using

*This rule applies to Semitic Maltese, but not always to Romance loan-words, cf. M. *età*, umīltà, menù.*

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the Arabic form ɗa, ɗi  adjectivally, that is, elided with the article, and, when it is used alone as pronoun, the need of a final consonant on which the long vowel may rest.  

As regards the plural, I agree fully with Nöldeke that it is of more recent formation. The form baɗu(n) seems to have been imported from North Africa and to have settled alongside the masculine and feminine singular forms, following their development. Ḥadayna thus gave bedayn and consequently beday (by analogy with the singular and by the regular disappearance of the final -m consonant when preceded by a diphthong, cp. baɗa̱ > baɗa). One should remember that the forms baɗu(n) and baɗū occur also in North Africa. The question relating to the existence in Maltese of the diphthong ay in all the full plural forms in place of the Maghrebinic long vowel y is difficult to answer. Maltese has a tendency to retain the diphthongs of Classical Arabic in many words which in various modern dialects are pronounced with a long vowel (cf. Cl. Ar. saum, M. saum, Dialects sām; Cl. Ar. ḫa’u, M. ḫeu, Dial. gā; Cl. Ar. ḫayr, M. ḫayr, Dial. gbēr). But this explanation is not convincing. The reason perhaps lies in the long vowel of the singular ḏān(n). In forcing itself into the old form of the demonstrative with a long vowel ā closed by the final consonant n, the N.Afr. baɗāna has adapted itself by accepting the ā vowel. The attraction of Maltese for diphthongs helped to standardize this use. The same did not occur in the other dialects because the ā vowel of their singular forms stood in a weak final position in an open syllable and was eventually supplanted by the long vowel of the plural suffix -āna. I may also mention that Semitic Maltese stress rules exclude the possibility of a final accented vowel in open syllable, as in baɗā, but may have a final accented syllable ending in a diphthong (cf. M. ādy, ēyye, saqāy, meʃšey, krbēy).

In this treatise I have endeavoured to make a close but brief study of one of the many interesting peculiarities that the linguist comes across in his study of our language. I only hope that it will be of some help to those who will choose to carry their studies of this and other subjects further.

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3 This need for a final consonant after a long vowel in an accented open syllable is attested also in such loan-words as M. skrān, pl. skreyyen (<<English screw (pumpkin)), M. blūn, with derivatives blūni and blūna, (<<Eng. blue), as also in sporadic cases, as in the folk-poem 'L-Ghurusa tal-Mosta' where the word baɗān (<<It. pascia) occurs for modern usage baɗa.)
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